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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 000129

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PK

SUBJECT: ODRP CHIEF ENGAGES PAKISTAN'S MILITARY LEADERSHIP

REF: ISLAMABAD 5283

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Major General Helmy, Chief of Office of the Defense Representative - Pakistan (ODRP), met with senior Pakistan military leadership to reinforce our commitment to the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship. The officials expressed concerns about the effect "conditionality" on U.S. assistance could have on the relationship and on Pakistan's ability to execute counterterrorism (CT) operations. Officials also raised a number of questions on specific assistance cases, while General Helmy explored opportunities for the U.S. to provide much-needed training aimed at enhancing Pakistan's CT capabilities. END SUMMARY.

U.S. REAFFIRMS SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

¶2. (C) Touching base with the senior Pakistani military leadership in the wake of the Bhutto assassination and resulting civil unrest, Major General Helmy met with the following officials during the week of January 1: Air Chief Marshal Tanvir, Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force; Vice Admiral Humayun, Chief of Staff, Pakistan Navy; Lt Gen Salahuddin, Chief of the General Staff, Pakistan Army; Lt Gen Athar Ali, Director General, Joint Staff; Lt Gen (ret) Tirmazy, Secretary, Ministry of Defence Production; and Kamran Rasool, Secretary of Defence. In these meetings, MG Helmy delivered a message keyed to five main points:

-- First, the U.S. commitment to our security relationship is firm, and we hope to see it strengthen over coming years.

-- Second, we understand and share Pakistan's concerns regarding media reports and public comments regarding the security of Pakistan's special weapons. The USG has confidence in Pakistan's ability and commitment to secure and safeguard these weapons. If the USG had concerns, it would address them directly to the GoP in an appropriate manner.

-- Third, recent changes to the FY 08 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program with Pakistan can be successfully addressed by closely working together in developing a way forward. This approach will build confidence in Pakistan's use of FMF and establish stronger justification for assistance programs in FY 09 and beyond.

-- Fourth, we respect the maturity and responsibility demonstrated by the Pakistan Army during the recent political crises, and urge that it continue, especially during the

campaign period leading up to February 18 elections.

-- Fifth, please accept our deepest condolences on the death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

MEETING WITH PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

¶3. (C) Air Chief Marshal Tanvir, Pakistan Air Force (PAF), stressed the need for improved communication, noting the Embassy's official protest regarding a Dec. 11 potential intercept of Coalition aircraft (reftel). Following on this, Tanvir suggested a number of issues would be addressed in the upcoming combined F-16 air exercise Falcon Talon. Tanvir and Helmly agreed this would be a good opportunity to document procedures and adjust where necessary. Tanvir also agreed to use Falcon Talon as a platform to discuss potential U.S. Air Force training of PAF (and perhaps Army forces), particularly on procedures regarding Joint Tactical Air Controllers (JTAC) and Search and Rescue (SAR). MG Helmly and Tanvir also discussed training Pakistan's F-16 crews in Close Air Support. Finally, Tanvir asked for assistance in building a night strike capability, asking specifically about Brite-Star for PAF Combat Search and Rescue helicopters.

¶4. (C) Embassy Note: Since MG Helmly's meeting with Tanvir, Pakistan has postponed Falcon Talon given its proximity to Feb. 18 elections. As it could be many months before the exercise can be rescheduled, ODRP is exploring alternative options - such as command post exercises - for providing the training mentioned above as it targets building counterterrorism capabilities.

¶5. (C) On the Brite-Star system, (a night vision multi-sensor

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targeting imager), both the Pakistan Army and PAF have cited interest in this system before. At a Security Assistance Working Group Meeting in February 2007, Pakistani officials were still deciding whether to proceed with a request for Brite-Star. ODRP's Security Assistance Office (SAO) has since requested that Pakistan define its requirement and submit a Letter of Request for price and availability, which would allow the USG to explore possibilities for providing the system. On January 7, ODRP's SAO sent the Ministry of Defence - Production a memorandum restating this request. End Note.

PAF F-16 ISSUES

¶6. (C) Tanvir expressed appreciation for moving up shipment of four EDA F-16s; he particularly noted the support of CSAF Moseley and Deputy Secretary England. Regarding the PAF's ongoing desire to acquire Navy-owned F-16s, which PAF expects to be designated as Excess Defense Articles (EDA), Tanvir asked that it be a "matter of record" that Pakistan wanted these aircraft; MG Helmly assured Tanvir it was so noted.

¶7. (C) Raising the F-16 Mid-Life Update case, Tanvir again asserted, as he has on many occasions, that the original costs estimate should be lower since the MLU location will be outside Pakistan. (Note: We hope Pakistan officials will be clearer on this issue once DSCA conducts a thorough assessment of the case and responds formally. Participating in the Program Management Review should also provide greater clarity.) Lastly, Tanvir asked about the status of Pakistan's request to modify the MLU case to pay a greater percentage of costs from FY 07 FMF (\$137M) MG Helmly noted the request is still under consideration.

PAKISTAN NAVY - REPEAT REQUEST FOR FRIGATES, BUT NEED TO FOCUS ON P3

¶8. (C) Vice Admiral Humayun again asked that EDA frigates be included in the FY 09 ship transfer program. Humayun also asked for a classified presentation on Hawkeye Systems and for an increase in IMET for the Pakistan Navy; MG Helmly

indicated we would follow up. In closing, MG Helmly stressed the need for the Pakistan Navy to develop the capability to begin employing their P3 maritime patrol aircraft in land surveillance to better support counterterrorism efforts.

PAKISTAN ARMY AND JOINT STAFF

¶9. (C) Lt Gen Salahuddin, Chief of General Staff, reported that a Cobra attack helicopter was lost and another damaged during recent combat operations in Kurram Agency (FATA). Salahuddin went on to focus on the rising pressures on the Army. He noted there was a "thinning out" of the Army along the Pakistan-India border to provide reinforcement to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Other stresses included the need to expand the Frontier Corps in the North West Frontier Province, as well as increasing pressure on the Army to support law enforcement and paramilitary efforts overall. Salahuddin also raised the issue of potential effects of "conditionality" attached to U.S. assistance. Salahuddin's remarks were echoed by Lt Gen Athar Ali, Joint Staff, who expressed strong concerns over the "conditionality of FMF" and calls for transparency regarding use of Coalition Support Funds (CSF). He also asked for our assistance in expediting CSF reimbursements - Post is reviewing claims for July - Nov 2006; OSD has approximately \$282M in claims for March - June 2006.

Ministry of Defense - Production (MOD-P)

¶10. (C) MOD-P's Lt Gen (ret) Tirmazy raised a number of questions regarding various security assistance cases, including:

- Link-16 and DRFM for F-16s
- Delay in TOW 2 missile delivery due to mechanical faults
- M109 Howitzer cases in which the price increased \$3M from LOA receipt to contract
- Pakistan Navy's need for 3-4 frigates to meet their operational requirements

MG Helmly provided initial responses to his questions and noted that ODRP would determine status/details and provide

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formal responses. General Helmly stressed the importance of the upcoming National Defense Policy Committee visit. (Note: General Helmly intends to enhance General Tirmazy's overall understanding of these cases by providing more information on the legal and procedural requirements of U.S. FMF/FMS systems and processes.)

Secretary of Defence Rasool

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¶11. (C) SecDef Rasool stated that the GoP intended to launch a more aggressive effort to win the support of the populace in Swat through programs aimed at strengthening civil government. He clearly understood the importance of succeeding in Swat. (Note: Security forces launched a new offensive in Swat January 6. Media reports stated that security forces brought relief goods, including blankets and food.) Regarding upcoming parliamentary elections, Rasool speculated that the Army would be needed to secure polling places as police would be stretched thin. He noted, however, that Chief of Army Staff Kayani had argued against this. MG Helmly agreed with Kayani's more cautious approach, adding a negative perception could be created by the visual of having army troops posted near polling stations. Regarding the F-16 cases, SecDef Rasool noted the concept of separate air bases was acceptable.

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